

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2561

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks, February 22, 2018

Title: An act relating to temporary duties for the wildland fire advisory committee.

Brief Description: Concerning temporary duties for the wildland fire advisory committee.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Dent, Blake, Dye, Doglio, Johnson, Peterson and Eslick).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/18, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/20/18, 2/22/18 [DPA-WM].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Directs the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to review and make recommendations on specified issues relating to unprotected lands and community-based fire prevention programs.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Van De Wege, Chair; McCoy, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Member; Honeyford and Nelson.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: The Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee was created through legislation in 2015. The Advisory Committee advises the Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner) on all matters related to wildland firefighting in the state. This includes developing strategies to enhance the safe and effective use of private and public wildland firefighting resources. The Commissioner has discretion over membership, but at minimum must invite at least the following people to participate:

- the local wildland fire liaison appointed by the Commissioner;

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

- two county commissioners, one from east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains and one from west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains;
- two owners of industrial land, one owner of timberland and one owner of rangeland;
- the State Fire Marshal or a representative of the State Fire Marshal's Office;
- two individuals with the title of Fire Chief, one from a community located east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains and one from a community located west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains;
- one individual with the title of fire commissioner;
- one small forest landowner; and
- one representative from each a federal wildland firefighting agency, a tribal nation, a statewide environmental organization, and a state land trust beneficiary.

Firefighting Services on Unprotected Lands. Under current law, fire protection agencies are not required to provide firefighting services to unprotected land, which is defined as improved property located outside the jurisdiction of a fire protection service agency. Property owners of unprotected lands are encouraged to form or annex into a fire protection jurisdiction or enter into a contract for firefighting services. If this does not occur and firefighting services are provided to unprotected land, the property owners must reimburse the agency initiating firefighting services on unprotected land for certain costs incurred.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Commissioner must direct the Advisory Committee to review, analyze, and make recommendations to include:

- quantifying the areas in the state that are not included within a fire district or subject to a planned fire response, and make recommendations on how these areas could be protected and a potential source of funding; and
- examining the value of community programs that educate homeowners and engage in preventative projects, and make recommendations on whether the programs should be advanced and a potential source of funding.

DNR must provide the Legislature with a report on the Advisory Committee's efforts and recommendations by November 15, 2019, and a status update by December 31, 2018.

EFFECT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Specifies that the Advisory Committee must specifically analyze and develop recommendations on potential administrative and legislative actions on unprotected lands, consult with relevant stakeholders not on the Advisory Committee, and include this information in the December 31, 2018 status report.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: There are great concerns about areas that are currently unprotected from fire. The Advisory Committee seems to be a good place to work on this issue, as well as to look at how to promote the Firewise program in more areas. This Advisory Committee has real value and can be useful tool for the Legislature in the future.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Tom Dent, Prime Sponsor; Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association; Tom Bugert, The Nature Conservancy.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.